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TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson No. 12

BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Twelve

THE EMPEROR

In the preceding lesson, the general meaning of Key 4 is given as **Reason.** This has two aspects, as do the attributions of all the Tarot Keys. The universal aspect is that rational quality of the Cosmic Mind which sets in order all manifestations of the Life-power. The personal aspect is the reflection, or particularization, of this universal rational quality, in the field of man's action and experience. Thus Key 4 represents the Life-power as the Sovereign Reason, the Great Lord ruling all manifestation; and at the same time pictures that in yourself which enables you to control the conditions of your environment.

The seat of the Emperor is just like the seat of the High Priestess, a cube. Since the days of Pythagoras, this one of the five regular solids has been taken as representing the physical plane. It is also a symbol of order, regularity and truth, because it is composed of equal faces, has boundary lines of equal length, and has faces which are squares, corresponding geometrically to the number 4.

A cube is bounded by twelve lines, eight points and six faces. Thus the enumeration of the characteristic properties which distinguish a cube from other solids combines the numbers 12, 8 and 6. The sum of these is 26, the numeral value of the Divine Name יהוה, Jehovah, which is often termed **Tetragrammaton** because it is written with four Hebrew letters.

This "name" signifies "That which was, that which is, that which will be." Without attempting to define, it declares that whatever is real now, has been, and will be eternally the same in essence. What is more, its value, 26, is related to the cube in another manner.

Every cube has exactly thirteen axes of symmetry, or lines of balance which cross one another at the interior center. Consequently, from the inner center of a cube there radiate exactly twenty-six lines connecting that center with points at the exact center of the twelve boundary lines, with points at the exact centers of the six outer faces, and with points which are the eight corners of the cube.

The cube therefore, as a symbol for the physical plane, as a symbol for order and for truth, and as a symbol whose very proportions are related to the numeral value of יהוה, Jehovah, is a perfect representation of the idea that the **One Reality**, manifested in all the appearances of the physical universe, is actually the real **presence** of the limitless Life-power which is the sovereign ruling principle of the universe.

In the tabernacle of Moses, therefore, and in Solomon's Temple, the Holy of Holies where the ark of the covenant was kept was a cubical room; and on the propitiatory, or mercy-seat of the ark, rested the Shekinah, or Divine Presence, which was understood to have its spatial location at the inner center of the Holy of Holies. Similarly, in the Apocalypse, the heavenly city which represents the completion and perfection of the Divine Order is described as being a perfect cube, since its length, breadth and height are said to be equal; and the throne of the Lamb (a young ram), is said to be in its midst, or at the inner center, as a **source of light** for the whole city.

The white hair and beard of the Emperor identify him as the Ancient of Days, or Great Lord, designated by the word יהוה. For the same reason he is shown in profile so that only one eye is showing. This is an ancient piece of symbolism intimating that even our highest concept of Reality is necessarily one-sided and imperfect. Note also that this white-haired, white-bearded ancient is the figure described in the first chapter of the Apocalypse—he who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who is also the Lamb (Ram).

The ram's head on the side of the cube, the same design in the medallion on the Emperor's shoulder, and the astrological symbol for Aries at the top of his helmet, refer primarily to the attribution of the sign of the Ram to the letter Heh, to which Key 4 is attributed. The symbol of the ram is of great antiquity.

In India it denotes **Agni**, the god of fire. As a common noun, the Sanskrit word **agni** is an alternative name for the element of fire which is usually termed tejas. In books of Hindu occultism, the **agni tattva** is said to be the subtle principle of sight. This agrees with the attribution of sight to the letter Heh and to Key 4.

The distinctive badge of a Freemason, a white lambskin apron, is a symbol of many of the ideas represented by Key 4. First of all, it is a square with a triangular flap. This combination of square and triangle is shown in the picture of the Emperor, whose head, chest and arms are enclosed in a triangle, while his legs form a cross, suggesting the same idea as the square.

Furthermore, the lambskin refers directly to the sign Aries. That sign is first in the series of twelve composing the astrological year. Thus it represents the first stage of a time cycle, before the various events of that cycle have come to pass. In Freemasonry, the lambskin apron is termed "the emblem of innocence," because whatever is innocent is spotless, or without blemish, and this is exactly the condition of the Life-power at the beginning of a cycle of self-expression. Freedom from the least trace of anything noxious is also included in the idea of innocence, and all versions of Ageless Wisdom agree that this describes the essential purity and holiness of the Life-power.

Again, the lambskin apron is conferred upon a newly made Mason as he stands in the north-east corner of the lodge. This makes another link of connection between the apron and ideas associated with the letter Heh, because the direction north-east is attributed to this letter. It is

the combination of east, which is attributed to the letter Daleth and the Empress, and north, which is represented in the Hebrew alphabet by the letter Peh, and in Tarot by Key 16, the Tower. The Empress is Venus. Key 16 is the Tarot symbol for Mars, which also is the ruler of the sign Aries.

This is a hint that in Key 4 we have represented a combination of the powers of Mars and Venus. This point was made in the preceding lesson when it was said that the Emperor, consort of the Empress, would have no subjects to govern unless his mate had borne him children.

The combination of the number 3, suggested by the triangle in which are the Emperor's head and arms, with the number 4, suggested by the cross formed by his legs, is another intimation of the same combination of feminine and masculine powers. This idea is emphasized by the shape of the Emperor's scepter, which is a modified form of the astrological symbol for the planet Venus. It means that the Emperor's active power of regulation has to do with the control of mental imagery. A similar hint is given in the Greek myth of a secret love-affair between Mars and Venus.

The Emperor's helmet, surmounted by the symbol for Aries, is also ornamented with twelve triangular points of which six are visible. These are analogous to the stars on the Empress' crown and to the jewels on the Fool's girdle. The space between the bars of the helmet is red so that the colors of the Emperor's headdress, gold and red, are those of the Sun and of Mars, both active in Aries.

The globe and cross in the Emperor's left hand are symbols of dominion. They are similar in form to the ornament at the top of the Empress' scepter; but her globe is green, and the Emperor's is red. These are complementary colors, the green corresponding to Daleth and Venus, the red to Heh and Mars. The little cross at the top of the globe is composed of five equal squares referring to 5, the number of the letter Heh.

The inverted T on the globe represents **Tav**, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. To Tav, Qabalists attribute the planet Saturn. Saturn is the astrological symbol of restriction, hence the inverted Tav on the globe of dominion intimates that the Emperor's rulership and authority are expressed in his ability to reverse Saturn, that is, to reverse the action of that aspect of the Life-power's self-expression which seems to limit our freedom. Such reversal of apparently restrictive conditions is precisely what you may accomplish by right use of the Constituting Intelligence symbolized by Key 4.

This right use consists in a higher vision of reality . . . a higher vision based on accurate observation of the actual situation on the physical plane. True occult science makes no attempt to deny the reality of the physical world or to minimize its importance. What is denied is the opinion materialists hold as to the **nature** of the physical world. To combat the errors of materialism, there is no need to deny the reality of physical things. Nor is it

necessary to explain away, by means of high-sounding verbal trickery, the actualities of time and space.

The higher vision includes insight into the powers of man as well as accurate observation of the physical conditions surrounding him. Such insight makes it evident that when we watch a train of events as it occurs in nature, apart from the introduction of the human personal factor, our watchfulness is rewarded by rational perception of the law or principle at work in the train of events we have observed. Reason, eye of the mind, sees this law or principle, and sooner or later the vision of principle stirs up the inventive power of subconsciousness. Then, through the combination of invention (creative imagination) and reason, the human personal factor enters into the situation.

By the introduction of this personal factor new trains of events are set in motion, new forms are produced, new conditions made manifest. Thus man applies the law which will make a piece of iron sink or float a great ship of steel. By **obeying** the law which makes a stone thrown into the air fall to the ground, man makes all-metal airplanes which have added another dimension to his journeyings.

By seeing things as they really **are**, instead of as they merely **look**, the Sovereign Reason, manifested through the human brain, reverses, one by one, all semblances of bondage which afflict mankind. For the Spirit of freedom is the perfect liberty of a rational order, operative in everything, everywhere.

Reason and insight are always contrary to mass-opinion. Hence they invariably stir up conflict. Knowing this, and foreseeing the immediate consequences of his ministry, Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Peace comes later, with fulfillment, not in the initial stages of the work.

Thus the Emperor is shown as a man of war, in contrast to the peaceful scene depicted in Key 3. Every step forward in man's dominion over the conditions of his environment has been contested bitterly by those who prefer to adhere to the "good old ways."

The mass mind resents innovations, clings to comfortable errors, scoffs at seers, and stones prophets. Yet the Sovereign Reason is protected by the armor of truth, which is pictured in Key 4 as being made of steel, the metal attributed to Mars. The final test of our vision is to carry it into action, and since "Mars" rules action, the symbols here tell us that even the mass mind will surrender its follies when confronted by the beneficent results of true vision expressed in action.

Many a person who crosses the continent by airplane today would have ridiculed the notion of such a flight in the "enlightened" year of Our Lord, 1900. The Wrights made their first flight in 1903, but as late as the spring of 1908, a magazine rejected an article by Byron Newton who had witnessed their later achievements. The editor's comment was: "While your

manuscript has been read with much interest, it does not seem to qualify either as fact or fiction." Remember this when you encounter skepticism concerning the value of your occult studies. Long ago, the wise learned the futility of trying to convert the world by words. Even deeds sometimes fail to convince those who are blinded by prejudice.

The skirt of the armor, and the flaps which cover the Emperor's arms, are violet. In the color scale used for Tarot, violet is primarily attributed to Jupiter, represented by Key 10. The same color is assigned also to Aquarius, the zodiacal sign symbolized by Key 17. In astrology, Jupiter represents expansion, the reversal of contraction or constriction. Jupiter is also the planet associated with law, with scientific research, and with philosophy, as well as the planet ruling religion.

Now, Key 10 represents the scientific vision of the mechanism of the universe as it is seen by the wise. Hence the violet flaps of the Emperor's dress mean: **Reason clothes itself in the Vision of Reality.**

Since this vision is a revelation of truth concerning man as well as of the truth about the universe, the color violet links up also with Key 17, an obvious symbol of precisely that unveiling. In Key 17 this color is associated with Aquarius, because the Inner School has long foreseen a great revelation of truth during the Aquarian Age now drawing.

The mountains in the background are of igneous rock colored red to emphasize the fiery quality of the sign Aries. These barren rocks are in sharp contrast to the fertility and productiveness of the Empress' garden. They represent vividly the sterility of mere intellection—use of reason for its own sake without any practical application to life. Again, they suggest the fruitlessness of mere regulation and arrangement unless there be something warm and vital to set in order.

Disintegrated rock is the principal component of the soil which supports vegetation. Thus the bleak cliffs behind the Emperor are really the basis for the lush growth in the garden of the Empress. So is pure reason, properly broken down into its elements, and mixed with the emotional qualities predominating in subconsciousness, the basis for all the creative works of human imagination. For it is by analysis, or the breaking down of our reasoning into its component principles, that we provide ourselves with material for invention and the production of new conditions beyond those given by the unmodified workings of nature.

This fourth Tarot Key is intended to impress upon you a clear pattern of the **ruling power of consciousness.** Whenever you exercise true reason, whenever you interpret an experience correctly, whenever you frame a satisfactory definition, you employ the power which defined the universe in the beginning. This power, working through you, is the maker and framer of your personal world and its conditions.

It rules everything now. At this moment, and always, it has absolute command over every circumstance and condition.

SYSTEM AND ORDER

The message of the Emperor is insistent and inescapable: If you would have the harmony and peace of Cosmic Order in your earth life, you must take steps to establish it.

In this lesson we deal with a vast metaphysical truth. Yet, for you, it will be nothing but theory, unless you apply it practically. Any statement of truth is like a blue-print. Necessary to guide us in the erection of a better house of life, but useless unless we set ourselves to actual constructive effort. Every cosmic law can be applied, and the field of application is in the "little things" of everyday life. You need not wait for great occasions.

Furthermore, the Emperor Key insists, in its picture language of subconsciousness, that if you would rule conditions round you calmly and positively, as the Emperor does, your first care must be to establish order—beginning with your thinking. No person ever advanced far on the occult path who did not first put his affairs in order. By this time, you should have a clear idea of what you want to do with time. The next step is to examine your schedule to see if you are putting first things first. In so far as possible, arrange your hours of productive work so that creative activities, and matters which require you to be mentally and physically at your best, are done early in the day. Try to get routine matters into your afternoon and evening schedule.

Your desk is a good place to begin. Maybe it's only a table in a corner. As soon as you finish reading this instruction, get it in order, and try to arrange it so that there will be no lost motion as you work or study.

This being neat and orderly seems such a little thing. Yet success is built on little things. Because the average person is too indolent, too indifferent, or too ignorant of cosmic law to apply it, order in the affairs of men and of nations is the exception.

The whole process of being orderly is tied up with the occult truth that things on this earth reflect what goes on in the high reaches of the sky. The kingdom of heaven would be better understood if we all knew that in the original Greek of the New Testament it is called "dominion of the skies". This kingdom is truly within us, because the same orderly laws of radiant energy, of chemistry, of physics, **and of consciousness**, which operate so precisely in the pageant of the heavens are actually working inside our bodies, every moment of our terrestrial existence. "That which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above", as The Emerald Tablet truly says.

Planets rush through space at unimaginable speeds. Yet they operate on a schedule of perfect timing and regulation. Seasons come and go in rotation. Tides ebb and flow according to definite order and system. Nothing in the cosmos is hit-or-miss. Every human life is part of the same order; but man's peculiar treasure is his ability to recognize this order, and to make it go farther than it does in the kingdoms of nature below him. This peculiar treasure, used ignorantly or negatively, is like the Prodigal's portion. Our misuse of our powers in disorderly living leads us, sooner or later, amongst the swine. Yet, though we beggar ourselves, we have only to "go home" to reverse our unhappy situation.

Thus we read in the parable that the Prodigal "came to himself". The Greek original is faithfully represented by the English rendering. It shows us a great secret. Neither other persons nor outer circumstances determine our success or failure. We make or mar our own fortunes. Thus, to establish order in our lives, we must begin first of all to **be** ourselves, and then set to doing what we are determined to be.

We must see, however, before we can do. Thus the sense of sight is attributed by Qabalists to the letter Heh, which is symbolized by Key 4. Consider very carefully what is said about this in the accompanying lessons. The main thing to attend to in your daily practice is to transform the activity of seeing from mere passive response to visual impressions into an active exercise of the inner power of vision. Incidentally, this will improve your physical eyesight. Unless light-rays impinging on your brain through your eyes are focussed by attention, you may look **at** things, but you will never see **into** them. Remember, the Emperor is just the Magician, in another guise.

By the exercise of reason, symbolized by Key 4, you know now that you are part of a definitely beneficent order. The Primal Will is always a Will-to-good. There are no inimical conditions. All appearances to the contrary are the results of man's own disorderly thinking, rooted in the bad habit of accepting superficial impressions at face value. Every step forward in human progress was preceded by some person's more attentive consideration of things at which the rest of humanity had never really looked.

Every "evil" is a blessing in disguise. Face it, examine it, and your vision will penetrate the terrifying make-up. Behind the mask of terror you will see the face of the Divine Friend. Let your first steps in this practice be directed toward little, familiar things. Right near you, wherever you are, is always something which will enable you to be just what you want most to be, to do just what you want most to do. Often it is the very thing which appears to be either an unfavorable circumstance, or else to be nothing of particular importance.

Remember also that in the act of seeing positively and attentively you are employing an actual, tangible, measurable force—the light streaming to you from the sun. To realize this, to know that your practice is no metaphysical abstraction, is important. For the realization will be taken up by your subconsciousness, and by deductive reasoning that part of your mind will work out the logical consequences. Your emotional tone will change, expressing itself in

moods of abiding confidence that you have always at your disposal for constructive use the very energy which does all the tremendous work of running this orderly cosmos. That same energy is now known to science to be the actual substance of all physical things. Through you, as you come to know it better and better, it can and will accomplish all things needful to enable you to experience, day by day, a life of ever-expanding liberation.

Begin, then, with things near at hand. Examine your time-schedule, and get first things first. Examine your possessions. Rid yourself of burdens resulting from the need for taking care of things you do not use. Clear the deadwood out of your filing-cabinet, library, clothes-press, bureau drawers. Release all you have not used during the last year. Sell it, or give it away. Human beings often forge chains for themselves by hoarding trifles that "may come handy". Why be a magpie? Then, having cleared for action, determine to manage time and things. Record your successes and your failures. Especially the failures. When you see what they really are, you can turn them into achievements.